



REPORT ON THE 2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

To the citizens of the 16th Legislative District

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for taking time to read my newsletter updating you on our whirlwind legislative session. I appreciate that after 59 days, 2,204 bills introduced, 391 bills passed, and many great debates, our **2006 legislative session is now in the books. It's nice to be home.**

We made **good progress** this year on **important issues** such as **helping students** with the **WASL**, providing **assistance to farmers, water rights, protecting children** from sex offenders, **expanding Washington State University – Tri-Cities** into a

four-year institution, among others. We also **created** a new **Department of Early Learning** that will integrate childcare and early learning programs and go a long way in helping prevent some of the problems we see in society today.

This was my 14th year being involved directly with our Legislature. After serving 12 years as a legislative assistant for our district, I now have one term under my belt as your state representative. I work with tremendous folks in the Legislature. Whether they're elected officials or the knowledgeable and dedicated staff we have, **I continue to enjoy and be amazed with the whole experience.**

My **priorities** as **your state representative** remain the same as the day you elected me to office: **helping farmers** with agricultural needs, **creating** and **preserving jobs, strengthening** our **schools**, making **health care** more **affordable**, and **protecting vulnerable citizens.**

In closing, I'd like to **thank you for allowing me the honor to be your state representative.** Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Rep. Maureen Walsh

DISTRICT OFFICE OPEN

In order to best serve our constituents during the interim, Sen. Mike Hewitt, Rep. Bill Grant and I share a 16th District office in Walla Walla. My legislative assistant Marge staffs the office for us. Please call or stop by if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

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RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

If you need information about state government, you may find the following Internet sites to be great resources. Or, you can always call or e-mail my office.

hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/walsh.htm – offers my biography and views on various issues.

access.wa.gov – provides access to state agency services, including applying for unemployment benefits, renewing car tabs, and much more.

leg.wa.gov – offers committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you'd want to know about the Legislature.

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HELPING LOCAL FARMERS GET THEIR PRODUCTS TO EASTERN MARKETS

Working with my 16th District seatmates, we were able to help **secure state funding** for a **new Wallula distribution center**. The funding will be used by the **Port of Walla Walla** to buy land, provide water service and build a road and rail loop.

This **private-public partnership** offers agricultural producers an additional venue in which to market their goods. It's not only great for our region – but for all of Washington. **Farmers will be able to get their products to the East Coast in six days.**

I'll continue to support ideas that **boost agriculture in our region and state.**



ASSISTING FARMERS WITH THEIR ENERGY COSTS

I supported a measure that will **assist farmers with their energy costs**. **House Bill 2424 exempts farmers** from **sales and use taxes** on **diesel fuel** used for nonhighway purposes. It covers diesel fuel used for soil preparation, crop cultivation and crop harvesting services.

Family farms are vital to our economy. Our district farmers asked for this relief and I'm glad we were able to provide it to them.

HISTORIC PLAN FOR THE COLUMBIA RIVER PUT IN PLACE

After decades of negotiations, we took a major step towards **water peace for the Columbia River**. Many people representing important interests provided input – including my predecessor, former Rep. Dave Mastin – and we found a **good compromise**. The new **Columbia River Plan (House Bill 2860)** will:

- Provide for **\$200 million in bonds** to be used for **water storage and conservation**;
- Require **one-third of the water to stay in streams for fish** and allows **two-thirds of water** to be used for **irrigation or drinking water**; and
- Allow **innovative agreements between water users** and the **state** to **use water more efficiently** and **protect valuable habitat** for fish.

This is truly a historic piece of legislation that represents a strong commitment to the future of eastern Washington. The **Columbia River** is our **lifeline for commerce, fish and, most importantly, farmers**. I'm proud I was able to see this day finally arrive and play a part in helping the bill pass.



Kirkland Junior High School students enjoy lunch in front of the Capitol.

Rep. Walsh takes a moment with Ms. Miller of Kirkland Junior High School and her husband, Kelly – “The Sausage King” – who came to Olympia to serve his Walla Walla Sweet Onion sausages to students.



WALLA WALLA SWEET ONION ALMOST BECOMES STATE VEGETABLE

The famous **Walla Walla Sweet Onion** nearly became our **state's official vegetable**. **House Bill 1964** – a concept from Kirkland Junior High School students and one that I sponsored – passed the House, but **died in the Senate**.

We understand, and the Potato Commission testified to, there are more economically viable vegetables that could be considered for our state vegetable – and we respect this. Our aim was not to promote the Walla Walla Sweet Onion as our state's leading agricultural product but, rather, believe it **reflects the individuality** of our **state's geography, history and culture**.

In a short session, it was quite a feat the bill got as far as it did. **The ninth grade students** shepherded the measure through committees in the House and Senate, and **off the floor of the House with 95 votes!** It was a **great educational exercise** in the **legislative process** and Ms. Miller is a hero in all of her students' eyes for providing a **first-hand opportunity to engage** with the **Legislature**.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH

HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Ranking Republican Chair on the House Children and Family Services Committee

I'm proud to be **Ranking Republican Chair** on the **House Children and Family Services Committee**. Very few first-term legislators are granted this great honor and responsibility. I've enjoyed this position and look forward to being strongly involved with the committee's future efforts.



Creation of Department of Early Learning

Studies show us how **important** the **early years of life** are for our **students**. That's why it's **vital we ensure children** get off to the **right start in life academically**. If they can, **we'll reduce a lot of the problems** we see in society today.

I supported a measure that **creates the Department of Early Learning**. The department's duties will be to **set early learning policy** and **integrate childcare and early learning programs** in the state. I believe this coordination of policy and programs is essential to our children's futures.

This is one of the most important steps we can take to help empower families to have their **children ready to enter the K-12 system**. The rewards we'll reap from this effort will be profound and I'll keep you posted on its progress.

K-12 public education

I often hear from constituents who say we must **keep our academic standards**, but that they have **concerns with** the **Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)**. I agree with these assessments.

This legislative session saw legislators **acknowledge WASL concerns** and **new assessment alternatives**, while **not abandoning academic standards**. As a result, the following measures were passed:

- **\$20.2 million** for **additional instruction** for those in the class of 2008 who did not pass portions of the WASL;
- **Diagnostic testing for students** to find and address their learning gaps;
- Creation of a **student-centered planning program**;
- Reviewing viable options for equally rigorous **career and technical education alternatives**; and
- **Studying why students struggle** on parts of the **WASL**.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY - TRI-CITIES TO EXPAND INTO A FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION

Washington State University - Tri-Cities will become the **state's next public baccalaureate institution** after a measure that passed this year.

House Bill 2867 directs Washington State University - Tri-Cities to prepare a plan for **expanding into a four-year institution** by the start of the **2007 academic year**. It also allows for the admission of lower-division students directly into programs beyond the biotechnology field.

This helps **diversify our economy** not only **locally**, but **statewide**. It also assists folks in getting trained in different areas. This is important as our region continues to grow.

A lot of **people worked hard at the local level** to make this possible and **they deserve credit**. I'm pleased I could play a part in helping their efforts come to fruition.



WARNING PEOPLE ABOUT THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING FROM BOATS

We've seen **tragic situations** in which **people** have been **poisoned and killed through carbon monoxide inhalation** from **behind boats**. With the help of a College Place family who was impacted by such a tragedy, **I led efforts** this legislative session to **educate the public about this serious problem**.

I was the prime sponsor of **House Bill 2899**, but it stalled in the House Appropriations Committee. Fortunately, I was able to offer a

successful amendment to Senate Bill 6364 – which also prohibits the dangerous activity of “teak surfing” – that **revises our state vessel laws** to include **educating the public** about **carbon monoxide poisoning**.

With victims' families present, the bill entitled **“The Jenda Jones and Denise Colbert Safe Boating Act”** was **signed into law** March 20. The date marked the seven month anniversary of the tragic death of Jenda Jones, a beautiful young woman from College Place.

My heart aches for all the **victims' families** and **I admire their courage** in sharing their stories and testifying before legislators. **Their selfless efforts will save lives**.



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Committees:

Appropriations

Children and Family Services, *Ranking Republican Chair*
Select Committee on Hood Canal

Task forces and councils:

Washington Council for the Prevention of Child
Abuse and Neglect

Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery of
Services to Children and Families

Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force

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